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ABSTRACT

Presidents and top-level administrators often need to hear more than the obvious reasons to maintain a commitment to retention programs, equal access, and equal opportunity. The most potent arguments center on appeals based on the costs of not having a well-managed program of equal educational opportunity, (e.g., litigation costs, tarnished image, recruitment impacts, and enrollment/revenue losses) and not implementing a student retention program (e.g., mission failure, negative public relations, and lost revenues). An awareness of the following strategies can promote the effective negotiation of changes on campus: (1) gaining administrative support by appealing to the "college purpose," illustrating the impact of student attrition, focusing on costs and student opinion, and highlighting marketing benefits; (2) establishing cooperation between academic and student affairs areas; (3) building faculty support by personalizing the approach, building "ownership" into the programs, and recognizing faculty participants; (4) building campus support; (5) beginning with a pilot project; and (6) drafting program proposals. These approaches should be used sensibly, avoiding extreme zealousness, to enhance the success and visibility of the equal educational opportunity/retention program. (AYC)

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HOW TO SELL YOUR INSTITUTION ON EEO/RETENTION

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How to Sell Your Institution on EEO/Retention

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A) INTRODUCTION

As a result of the passage of several anti-discrimination laws (within the Education Amendments in 1972) many forms of sex and race discrimination no longer exist and major changes have occurred on virtually every campus in the country. The vast majority of these changes were not made because of lawsuits or because a federal investigator was knocking at the door. Very few colleges and universities in the country have ever seen -- or are ever likely to see -- a federal investigator.

In most cases, colleges and universities changed their admissions practices because students and faculty and staff members, given the means under the new laws, put pressure on them to do so. Though much improvement has taken place since the early seventies, I do not want to imply that all of the problems on our campuses have been solved:

- Despite the increasing numbers of women and minorities entering medical, law, and graduate schools, most women are still majoring in traditionally "female" fields and being channeled into traditionally "female" jobs upon graduation.

- Despite an increase in the number of women and minorities entering the ranks of upper level college administration, very few higher education institutions have hired them as presidents, vice presidents, or academic deans.

- Despite a wide range of retention and marketing strategies attempted by colleges in Florida to

increase minority enrollment, the fact remains that the percentage of blacks pursuing higher education has decreased steadily over the past seven years and that educational parity between blacks and whites is still only a dream.

- In fact, despite more than 13 years of so called affirmative action and equal opportunity, despite Title XII and Title IX, and despite the progress that has been made, the general pattern of employment for women and minorities in most occupations and industries is distressingly the same as it was in 1972.

So, it is not yet time to say that the problems have been solved and that these anti-discriminatory laws are no longer needed to insure that all women and men, boys and girls receive education and opportunities that are based on their abilities and not their sex or race or age.

The existing laws are indeed powerful and have indeed had an impact - but what has been enacted into law can readily be amended, repealed, or weakened by a variety of congressional actions. Should that day come (and even if it doesn't) it is important that each of us can articulate the benefits of successful equal opportunity and retention programs to our own institutional leaders.

Although the benefits of these programs often seem so obvious to us, we must be capable of negotiating campus politics if we are to insure the continuation of these programs at our colleges and universities.

It seems to me (and maybe to you as well) that it should be sufficient to cite that it is our <u>social responsibility</u> to maintain a commitment to retention programs, equal access and equal educational opportunity; sufficient to state that

anything less than our best in these areas is a failure of institutional mission.

Yet presidents and top level administrators often need to hear more than these "obvious reasons". That's when it becomes imperative that we can effectively spell out the benefits of successful efforts in these important areas and tactfully, yet forcefully, identify negative outcomes associated with not making a commitment to these programs.

It appears that the most potent arguments (and therefore the most effective with senior administrators) center around: (1) lost revenues, (2) wasted institutional resources, and (3) negative public relations. Let me take just a few minutes to briefly discuss each of these as they relate to our unwillingness to comply with EA/EO and our failure to effectively address student retention.

B) Appeals Based on the Costs of Inaction

An institution's failure to establish a commitment to a well managed program of equal educational opportunity can potentially produce at least four consequences: (1) increased litigation costs, (2) tarnished institutional image, (3) negative recruitment impacts, and (4) revenue losses from foregone enrollment.

> Litigation Costs: a failure to comply with federal and state laws leads to increased litigation costs. This is so obvious that it seems redundant to even mention it. Yet in a recent sex discrimination case at the University of Minnesota, a federal judge ordered the university to pay nearly $2 million in attorney's fees and court costs. The potential liability to the institution in this class action suit has been estimated at over $40 million.

Tarnished Image: Consider the impact of such a settlement. An institution no longer has to be indicted on the grounds of discrimination; suspicion worthy of investigation is sufficient to alter an institution's reputation and integrity. A social stigma is automatically attached in such circumstances, very much like that associated with NCAA probation or AAUP censure. It takes years to re-polish an institution's image once it is tarnished.

Recruitment Impacts: Both of these consequences of failing to make a genuine commitment to EA/EO have negative impacts on recruitment. These impacts thwart the institutions' efforts to "diversify" its student body and decrease its draw power.

Enrollment/Revenue Losses: As a result, all of these factors can cost the institution hundreds of thousands of current dollars in lost enrollment revenues. Literally millions of future dollars are at risk.

Similar costs and negative consequences are at stake regarding student retention. On most campuses there is a general misunderstanding about student retention. Faculty often believe a student retention effort is an administrative mandate for grade inflation. Some student services professionals may initially resist retention activities on the grounds that they require too much "hand holding" and often necessitate a change in posture from student-initiated service to staff-initiated service. Administrators too often mistake retention strategies as an erosion of standards. All of these misconceptions are unfortunate and lead to complacency about attrition.

There are many definitions of retention but I prefer to define it as "the process of realizing both the enrollment and re-enrollment of students where appropriate and consistent with the educational objectives and expectations of the individual students".

There are many types of attrition. Some types we can do little to prevent. Other types, can be effectively controlled. The key to success in this area is to focus on the educational goals and expectations of students (particularly freshmen) and to develop low-cost, but high-yield programs and services that will address identified student needs.

Many Florida colleges and universities are making only meager progress in this area. I am familiar with many of the strategies being employed throughout the state. I still believe there is much more that can be done at a low cost that will greatly enhance student retention.

Failure to do so has at last three major consequences: (1) mission failure, (2) negative public relations, and (3) lost revenues. Let's look at each of these briefly.

Mission Failure: When we attract students to the institution and expend institutional resources, human resources, and tax dollars to start students on the path to higher education we are indeed well on our way to meeting the purposes for which we were created. However, if we admit students who have needs and problems that our institutions cannot or will not address, we should not be surprised when those students leave our institutions through the very revolving doors that we have created.

Negative Public Relations: When students leave our colleges and universities before they achieve their educational objectives or because they experienced dissonance regarding expectations they tend to project the blame back onto the institution. Remember the 250 rule used in sales. Everyone has an average of 250 personal friends or contacts and anything of either a positive or negative nature is likely to be shared with a large proportion of that network. A student, if disgruntled or dissatisfied, is a walking timebomb. Whether we get a positive or negative detonation is up

to us. One student's bar story about a college cannot be offset by ten times the volume of positive publicity generated by the institution. Prospective students and donors always consider the source of their information. They tend to believe former students and staff before they believe our own contrived propaganda.

Lost Revenues: Having consulted with several dozen colleges and universities across the country I have vividly seen the financial impact fo attrition. At the last five institutions alone (a major univerisity in Mississippi, a Baptist university in Tennessee, two southern community colleges, and a northern college) revneue losses attributable to attrition exceeded $30 million annually. That averages $6 million a campus. We cannot and should not expect to retain every student. But only a 25% increase in retention on each campus could generate an additional $1.5 million on the average in operating revenues. That's the kind of information that motivates administrators even if every other appeal has failed. Learn how to talk the language and you will achieve results.

For the remainder of our time I want to share some approaches and strategies that you can use to help bring about positive changes at your campus regarding EEO and retention programs. Copies of a handout entitled, "SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF CAMPUS POLITICS AN EA/EO AND RETENTION PERSPECTIVE" are available to you following this session. The remainder of my comments come from that handout.

SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF CAMPUS POLITICS:
An EA/EO and Retention Perspective

by
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An awareness of the following approaches/strategies can help you more effectively negotiate needed changes on your college campus. Specifically important are successful ways to gain administrative support and cooperation, faculty commitment, and financial resources.

I. Gaining Administrative Support

A. Appeal to the "college purpose":

A statement of purpose commits every institution to a course of action. In the future there is sure to be more emphasis on outcomes assessment. To what extent are the concepts (promises) within the purpose of your college realized? Perhaps an analysis of the marketing image of the college and a study of student perceptions would supply information on congruency. Does the college do what it says it will do? If it does not, what will need to change? How would an EEO/Retention program build on already existing strengths or eliminate weaknesses?

B. The Impact of Student Attrition:

Beginning in the mid-1970s many colleges began to realize that they were losing rougly 50% of their entering freshman classes the first year, and another 20% by the end of the sophomore year. These facts were generally discovered not until attrition research was conducted. Detailed analyses of enrollment patterns and student records are often required to establish a data-base for retention research and activities.

Estimates of attrition at many colleges are often 10-25% lower than the actual rates of attrition. Any program which can potentially reduce student attrition is of value to an institution. You must accurately define student attrition and measure it carefully. Your goal should be to positively influence retention and enrollment.

C. Cost Effectiveness Approach:

A 25% increase in retention can save most institutions between $.50 to $2.5 million a year. The cost of planning and implementing a program can range from as little as $5,000 to as much as $15,000. Maintaining the program will normally cost another $10,000 to $50,000 a year. In other words, the tuition

and formula funds of 5 to 10 students over a one year period would normally pay for such a program. The program should help retain many times that number of students. You need to make similar facts and figures about your institution known to top level administrators.

D. Student Opinion:

If students are dissatisfied with an aspect of their academic experience they can let you know through interviews, student opinion polls, feedback from faculty who are in the know, etc. Atune yourself to student feelings. Student opinion can be the most cogent argument for the necessity of a retention program. Pilot projects which generate very positive student opinions and high satisfaction, while maintaining quality, can likewise motivate administrators to consider "expanding" the pilot.

E. High Visibility for Student Recruitment/Marketing:

A sound program which yields high satisfaction and measurable results can be marketed. A brochure on special activities can be developed for the freshman year experience.

F. Sacrifice of Self:

Someone may have to be willing to do the work without pay, release time, or even moral support initially. During the first year at many colleges and universities, program advocates and advisors must work with only the possibility of reward, with no release time, and no added compensation. If the level of personal commitment is high and the commitment is to a program "for the students" then the program will produce positive results, and rewards will follow.

G. Effective Use of Consultants:

Consultants can provide positive feedback to the president about the development of the program. Conversely, when a program is good consultants help promote it (conferences, inclusion in books, word of mouth promotion). This recognition further enhances the administrative perception of the program and its value to the institution.

Experienced consultants are also useful when you wish to make or prove a point with the administration or faculty. You may know a program is good, but they need to hear it from someone else. That may sound like a cold, hard fact; but we all realize it is indeed a fact.

II. Cooperation Between Academic and Student Affairs Areas

A. Administrative Support:

Academic Deans and Deans of Students need to share ideas. This can be encouraged by a program advocate who is a student affairs person with a strong academic background or an academician with sensitivity to student affairs. The individual can serve to bridge any gaps and improve communication. The coordinator of your EEO/Retention efforts must be able to effectively communicate with leaders on "both sides of the house".

B. Emphasize That What You Are Doing Helps Faculty:

Keeping students enrolled helps everyone through an improved budget. Student development in terms of study skills, adaptability to college life, time management, etc., helps students to succeed in class. Faculty feedback to student affairs helps identify problems early. An understanding of other's roles and how your program positively affects someone else's is extremely beneficial.

C. Mutual Planning/Participation:

The broader the base of support the more effective will be your proposal/program. Use a campus-wide, systems approach. Both EEO and Retention efforts require this type of broad based involvement.

III. Faculty Support

A. Personalize the Approach:

Go to faculty and discuss your ideas/concepts. After all, faculty are the second largest group on campus (next to students) and you need their support and participation. Don't be afraid to let other people take credit for your ideas. After all, if they do so, they must agree with you.

B. Some Ways to Identify Faculty for the Program:

Which of the faculty:

1. are involved with extracurricular student actvities?
2. have a very high energy level?
3. are committed to the college and to teaching?
4. are committed to student support--extra tutoring, study sessions, etc?
5. have study skills components in their courses?
6. are known as caring instructors of high expectation (quality)?
7. have a counseling background?
8. have good organizational ability?

C. Build "Buy-In" and "Ownership" into the Program:

Always build a proposal with negotiable components. Allow as many persons as possible an opportunity to preview the proposal and offer ideas/suggestions or criticisms. Once the program is underway allow those who participate in it--faculty, staff, students--to critique the program, to modify it (within reason), to try something new (risk-taking). If a faculty member has the opportunity to help develop a "module" for the program, then he is committed. Allow faculty who have been in the program to train other faculty. Allowance for "ownership" among others than your office is critical.

D. Helping Others Become the Elite:

The one form of reward that costs very little but is exceedingly effective is recognition. Use every opportunity to do so in a mature, responsible way (e.g., articles in the student newspaper, local news, alumni letter; letters from the president, academic dean, dean of student affairs; introductions during faculty meetings, parent visitations, honor's day, etc.) Other methods of recognition include release time for instruction in the freshman course; opportunities to participate in productive workshops; opportunities to represent the College and its program at other colleges and at local, state, and regional meetings. You can generate dozens of ways to recognize faculty who participate or who actively support what you are doing in student retention and EEO.

IV. Other Important Considerations

A. Building Campus Support:

If you have faculty advisors who are committed to what you are doing, you have a strong political force. Faculty support can be gained and maintained. Don't however, forget the people who are the heart of the institution--staff personnel. They all play vital roles in a college environment and are responsive to requests for assistance. Again, thank, reward, recognize those who assist you.

B. Pilot Projects:

If you can't sell a full scale project, compromise for a pilot test of your idea. Pilot projects are excellent opportunities. You may need to volunteer the time, effort, or some of your department's budget, but you will if it is important to you.

V. Drafting Proposals

A. Document a Broad Base of Support: the wider and broader, the better.

B. Elevate Campus Awareness:

Whenever possible speak to the faculty, support staff, alumnae, etc. about the nature of the EEO and retention programs. Have experienced consultants conduct faculty awareness workshops. Take every opportunity to keep people informed about what you wish to do, and what your successes have been. Informed people will support a program which helps students, helps the institution, and is cost effective.

C. EEO/Retention Task Force

The President, as chief administrative officer, is the primary person to bring together representatives from the various college constituencies in order to identify those factors which may affect students and re-enrollment; as well as implementing those programs and policies, across departmental lines, which can be utilized to encourage students to complete their educational goals at the college.

I would recommend, therefore, that a President's EEO/ Retention Committee be established at the college, and that the President (or his designee) convene this committee in order to focus existing resources on a program that will, with integrity, emphasize the institution's strengths and minimize its weaknesses, thereby reducing unnecessary voluntary attrition and increasing enrollment.

D. Budgets

Accurately project costs (materials, consultant fees, salaries, release time, etc.) and compare them to the financial benefits (increased tuition, formula funds, auxiliary revenues, etc). expected as a result of improved retention. Don't forget to include positive impacts that can't be quantified such as improved morale, student goodwill, and the consequences of these impacts on enrollment and the budget.

IN SHORT, PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO GO THE EXTRA MILE IF THE PROGRAM IS LOGICAL, PRODUCTIVE, FINANCIALLY VALUABLE, AND PROFESSIONALLY PRESENTED. APPEAL TO THOSE CRITERIA.

A WORD OF WARNING REGARDING CAMPUS POLITICS

As a part of administration, the EEO/Retention officer must not allow zealousness to create "an advocate's attitude" toward any particular group or individual. Zealous efforts and an advocate's role should only be directed at the development of a system for equal educational opportunity.

Since we must work with and through top management to accomplish program goals, we cannot afford to have our motives or loyalties questioned. Being overly zealous with top management may make temporary gains through a fear process but it will not create lasting commitments.

Some EEO/Retention officers, unable to withstand the pressure of their peer groups, have become over-zealous, protected class advocates, and thus counterproductive. Such a posture usually causes internal conflicts and produces only meager results.

Extreme zealousness may have been needed during the days when legislation was new and the complacency of administrators needed to be reversed. Styles need to change with conditions, however. Using a "management by fear" approach today does nothing to enhance the cooperative support needed for successful EA/EO and Retention programs.

Get to know your institution. Identify its "movers and shakers". Become one yourself, and use sensible campus politics to enhance the success and visibility of your program.